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To: David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director
Department of Children and Family Services

From: Jon W. Fullinwider
Chief Information Officer

Subject: **AUGUST 5, 2003 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #3, DCFS RISK
MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

This memo provides our comments and recommendations pertaining to the August 5, 2003 motion by Supervisor Molina. In the motion, the Board ordered the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), with input from the Chief Information Office (CIO), to report back on three (3) directives related to managing risks associated with children in placement:

1. Determine the feasibility of implementing the MacLaren Plan of Care model to create a more efficient case file and information retrieval system.
2. Implement a negative outcome reporting system to report any problems within 24 hours to the Director that might impact the safety of children in placement.
3. Determine the feasibility of conducting an audit of the CWS/CMS to ensure that all cases are entered into the system and are timely, accurate and complete.

In addition, the Board instructed DCFS, with input from the CIO, to report back on a quarterly basis any occurrence of risk management issues, such as inadequate documentation, in an effort to identify and implement systemic changes to ensure the safety of children in placement.

Based on meetings with the First District, it is clear that the underlying issues pertaining to the Board directives involve oversight and enforcement of timely, accurate and complete case reporting in CWS/CMS. If case data is not maintained in a shared repository (CWS/CMS), management oversight of the necessary functions to ensure that the needs of children in placement are being met is problematic.

The following comments are based on meetings with your staff, which form the basis for the recommendation that the Board directives be addressed by a comprehensive systems management approach. This strategy involves a systematic understanding of the issues, clearly stated management policies, procedures, standards and benchmarks, and automated tools to assist in monitoring compliance with these standards for performance and outcome.

MacLaren Plan of Care Model Strategy

We concur with your analysis that the MacLaren Plan of Care is not feasible for departmental deployment due to cost, duplication and redundant data entry, and subvention issues. However, although the Children's Research Center (CRC) system does provide better access to CWS/CMS data, it does not provide the qualitative case narrative information essential for a complete case summary. CRC is also dependent on accurate, timely and complete entry of case information in CWS/CMS – the underlying issue that ultimately needs to be addressed.

Negative Outcome Reporting System

In addition to the Critical Incident and Child Fatality Review procedures outlined in your draft memo, we recommend that a reporting module also be developed and included in the process to alert management when the 24-hour standard for reporting has not been adhered to, or when an incident occurs that has not been reported through the Critical Incident and Child Fatality Review process. LAKids can be expanded to provide this function.

Additionally, LAKids can be used as the foundation for providing a comprehensive management information system for monitoring and reporting department operational status. The management information system should be based on a dashboard concept of red, yellow, or green designations for each key performance indicator that would provide an "early warning" of potential problems within the organization. Other key indicators could include court reports, home visits, case plans, etc. LAKids currently supports a similar functionality for case plans and can be modified for other key indicators.

CWS/CMS Utilization Audit

The draft memo indicates a quarterly review of all cases to ensure that all critical case information is entered in CWS/CMS. We believe that quality control/quality assurance is a continuous process and that benchmarks for key information can be established and monitored on a daily basis using existing tools like LAKids. Focused audits on cases and caseworkers that do not meet benchmark may be a more effective strategy to improve the quality and completeness of data entered into CWS/CMS.

A cursory review of the case plan data in LAKids suggests that the clear majority of workers maintain case plans in CWS/CMS. However, a small percentage of workers chronically do not maintain plans in CWS/CMS. It was interesting to note that caseworkers who did not have case plans established in CWS/CMS also tend to have supervisors that had a backlog of case plans requiring their review and approval. The focus of an initial quantitative and qualitative audit, including content review of narratives, should be directed toward the small percentage of caseworkers who do not routinely enter case plans in CWS/CMS. Employee performance reviews should be tied to compliance with departmentally established benchmarks for utilization of CWS/CMS.

The concept of reducing the court-reporting period from six months to 60 days to increase the value of using CWS/CMS to prepare reports may not lead to increased utilization because court reports can be prepared without using CWS/CMS as its data source. It is our opinion that a systems management approach based on departmental policy, use of automated tools to monitor compliance, and ease-of-use enhancements to CWS/CMS (either locally or at the state level) are the most efficient and effective ways to increase timely, accurate and complete case reporting in CWS/CMS.

My staff is available to discuss these comments and recommendations and assist your department in support of the Board's directives. Please call me at (213) 974-2008 or John McIntire, of my staff, at (213) 974-2154.

JWF:JM:jsl

c: Board of Supervisors